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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this guide is to assist child care personnel in finding and working with community resources. Aspects of setting up a resource system are discussed, including establishing responsibilities, identifying needs, locating resources, cooperating with other centers, and contacting resource agencies. Suggestions are made for keeping records to help document the need for the use of a community resource. Also described are categories of information to be kept on administrative records, the emergency card file, each child's individual file, parents' inquiry file, and a community resource file. Guidelines for informing parents about center policy concerning referral of children to resource agencies and for making observations of children to identify special needs are provided. Concluding comments focus on dissemination of information in order to use resources effectively and the evaluation of resource agencies. A sample resource card form, a sample emergency form, and brief descriptions of New Jersey state departments which serve young children are appended. (RH)

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WORKING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A Guide for Child Care Centers

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WORKING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A Guide for Child Care Centers

Department of Education

Fred G. Burke
Commissioner

Ralph H. Lataille
Deputy Commissioner

Catherine Havrilesky
Assistant Commissioner
Division of School Programs

Department of Human Services

Ann Klein
Commissioner

Gerald J. Reilly
Deputy Commissioner

Bernice L. Manshel
Director
Division of Youth and Family Services

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Trenton

New Jersey

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WORKING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES:
A GUIDE FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help your child care center find and work with community resources. By making maximum use of resources, a center expands its services and provides a link between the community and the families it serves. In this way the center becomes a more dynamic part of the community.

There are many different kinds of child care centers in New jersey. Some are large and some are small; some provide all-day care; others provide care for just a few hours each day. Some are private and non-profit; others are private and profit-making; a few are operated by the state's Department of Human Services.

As child care centers differ in their organization, they may also differ in their approach to child care and development. Although these differences are not addressed by this guide, they affect the way each center will work with community resources.

Child care centers are alike in more ways than they are different. All centers – from the large day care center that provides ten hours of service each day fifty-two weeks each year, to the small nursery school that operates three hours a day, three days a week, nine months a year – strive to provide children with the best possible environment and opportunities for growth.

All centers inevitably have a significant effect on the growth and development of the children they serve. The center is often the first out-of-home experience for the young child. Frequently, it is also one of the first community services with which a parent has a continuing relationship.

This guide *cannot* list for you the specific resources in your community, nor tell which resources are best for your center. It *can* help you get started in finding the resources that your center chooses to use. Although this guide refers throughout to centers for pre-school children, it recognizes that many centers provide after-school and summer care for children up to fourteen years old. While the needs of these children may vary from those of pre-school children, the basic need of the center to provide a link with community services exists. The process in this guide may be used to find resources to meet the needs of children of any age.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some of the words in this guide have different meanings to different people in different situations. To use the guide, it is important to understand the sense in which they are used here. They are, therefore, defined below.

Board/Owner: In some child care centers, policy-making powers are vested in a board of directors. In others, specifically those private centers that operate for profit, the owner-operator is the ultimate policy-maker. References to the board/owner in this guide means the person or group of persons who have authority to make policy for the center.

Caregiver: This term describes any person in a child care center who is directly responsible for the care of children.

Director: This term refers to any person who has direct supervision over the caregiver(s). In larger centers, there may be several layers of supervision; in small ones the director may also be a caregiver.

Parent: This term refers to the person(s) responsible for caring for the child in the home, whether or not that person is actually the child's biological parent.

Resource Agency: This term describes any community resource used to provide service to a center. It may be a public agency, a voluntary non-profit agency, a profit-making corporation, a health or social service, an individual who charges for his/her services, or someone who volunteers his/her skill and time. Volunteers, of course, meet the same qualifications as someone who is paid. The services of the resource may benefit the administration of the center or the program.

2. SETTING UP A RESOURCE SYSTEM

Establishing Responsibilities

The decision to use community resource agencies rests with the board/owner. In making an affirmative decision, the board/owner then determines:

- how much money is available for community resources
- how is the available money to be budgeted
- who determines the center's needs
- who interviews the resources and recommends the ones to be placed in the resource file
- who decides which resources will be placed in the resource file
- who decides which resource will be used
- who negotiates the agreement with the resource
- who evaluates the resource

There are probably as many ways to delegate responsibility for the above tasks as there are child care centers. Some are:

A supervisor, or head teacher, interviews resource agencies and recommends to the board/owner those to be placed in the resource file. The board/owner makes all the decisions on the use of the resource at the time the supervisor brings a need to their/his attention.

OR

The board/owner establishes the budget for expenditures for community resources and delegates all of the decisions to the center's director.

OR

A board member or committee of the board works with the director in establishing a resource file and making the decisions pertinent to obtaining the services of a resource. The committee then reports back to the board.

OR

A committee composed of board members, staff, and parents advises either the director or the board/owner on all decisions pertaining to using community resources.

Regardless of which method is chosen, it is important that board/owner, staff and parents all know of the center's policy regarding the use of community resources. Also everyone *must* know the procedures to follow to identify and secure a resource for the center.

Establishing Needs

Before seeking resources, the board/owner, staff and parents re-affirm the center's basic philosophy and agree to select resources compatible with that philosophy. A cooperative nursery school, for example, includes the parent caregivers in the staff training programs, whereas another type of center may offer parents workshops separate from staff training. Next, a center decides which needs are most pressing. For example, a center has three urgent needs: the *staff* wants additional training; the *board* feels that an attorney's services are required; and several *parents* have requested that their children be tested for learning disabilities.

The center initiates its community outreach by locating resources which can respond to these needs and which embrace a philosophy harmonious to that of the center. It then identifies resources for anticipated needs.

Locating Resources

The first step is to compile a list of *all* the agencies in the center's community that provide any kind of service useful to the center. This list should be all-inclusive, not selective. Selectivity comes later.

Begin by asking board members, staff, parents, volunteers, and others for suggestions. (It's important that they understand that only a few of those suggested may be used.)

Then talk with people from established community institutions such as the following:

- local district office of the Division of Youth and Family Services
- United Way organizations
- public libraries
- county or municipal health, social service or human service office
- county welfare agencies
- county extension service
- county department of education, local boards of education
- private community-based service organizations (such as the Red Cross, League of Women Voters, etc.)
- community coordinating child care (4-C) offices
- social services staff of local public, private and parochial schools
- county medical society
- county dental association, and
- county mental health office.

Some of these organizations may already have compiled service directories. The telephone book also lists community resources. The Yellow Pages list the following categories:

- physicians
- dentists
- hospitals

- child care or family services
- associations
- social service organizations
- clubs.

Local governmental agencies are listed in the white pages under the name of the county or municipality. Appendix III of this guide contains descriptions of child care services offered by some state agencies. Local offices of state agencies usually are listed under "New Jersey, State of" and federal agencies are listed under United States.

Remember: Anyone can have a number listed in the telephone book or buy an ad in the yellow pages. Therefore, a listing in either the yellow or white pages of the telephone book does not assure quality or credentials.

Cooperating with Other Centers

Before interviewing resource agencies, you may want to discuss with neighboring child care centers the possibility of exchanging information or even sharing agencies. Some centers find that a communications network can save time for all of them. Others go one step further by joining together in a contract with a resource agency that will serve all of the centers, either individually or as a group. Of course, centers which cooperate in hiring resource agencies to work directly with children and staff must agree on principles of child development. On the other hand, centers with differing philosophies can share the services of some resources such as accountants or attorneys.

Contacting Resource Agencies

Telephone the agency for a personal interview. Make sure that the person contacted understands that this is a "get acquainted" interview. When you go for the interview, begin by explaining the center's program and be fully prepared to answer questions. Be sure to discuss the center's and the agency's philosophy as well as such practical matters as the agency's hours and fees, and whether someone from the agency will come to the center. Ask for any written material available about the agency's services, such as brochures. Explain that the centers will notify resource agencies before placing them in the resource file. Make sure the agency understands that its services will be evaluated by the center.

At this point the person(s) responsible for selecting the resources decide which agencies from among those interviewed are best able to serve the center. The names of these agencies and all pertinent information (see Appendix I) are given to the person responsible for setting up and maintaining the resource file. Some of the selected resources will be able to meet the center's immediate needs, whereas others will address anticipated needs.

3. KEEPING USEFUL RECORDS

Good records help to document the need for a community resource. All child care centers must keep records. Each center develops its own system of record-keeping. It is not the function of this guide to outline the many kinds of records which may be used or adapted for use by child care centers.

(For help in developing an overall record-keeping system, an excellent source of sample records is included in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare publication series entitled "Day Care: Health Services." This booklet (DHEW #OCD 73-12) is available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.)

Administrative Records

Centers maintain administrative records as well as those pertaining to the children, their families, and community resources. Administrative records document the full operation of the center including the information below which is required by the Division of Youth and Family Services, Bureau of Licensing (see Appendix III), in keeping with the provision of the state licensing law and regulations:

- results of physical examinations and tuberculin tests for center staff;
- insurance records;
- academic credentials and employment records for center staff; and
- if applicable, transportation records, including bus or van schedules, school and bus drivers' licenses and names of second adults assigned to vehicles when more than six children are being transported in one vehicle.
- name of the physician on call for the center (or local health facility) to be used in the event of a medical emergency.

All or part of administrative records are available to appropriate board and staff members and, as directed by the board/owner, to auditing personnel, state licensing staff, local fire and health officials, etc.

Emergency Card File

The emergency card file contains information about individual children which is needed quickly. It includes but is not limited to the following:

- parent's name, home and work address and phone number;
- person and number to call in case of emergency if parent cannot be reached, relationship of person to child;
- name of doctor or health facility to use in an emergency and parent's written permission to do so;
- person to whom ill child should be taken if parent is not available, relationship to child; and
- information about any special needs or restrictions, such as allergies, diet restrictions or special health conditions.

The *emergency card* file is available to all staff; however, the information it contains is always handled with discretion. A parent's name or telephone number is not given out without the parent's permission.

Child's Individual File

The *child's individual file* contains confidential information including:

- developmental screening records (including hearing, vision, speech, etc.);
- registration and health records, including immunization and dental health records;
- developmental records, including skill levels, social and emotional adjustment;
- anecdotal records

This file is accessible only to the child's caregiver, parent, and director.* If it appears that a child has a special need, the director may share some or all of the information in this file with staff who work closely with the child.

Parent's Inquiry File

Many centers maintain a list of community resources to respond to inquiries from parents. In making the list, centers locate several resources for similar services and try to find resources which give the parent some financial choices (a public agency with no fee or a minimal one; a voluntary agency with a sliding fee scale; a private service with full fee). In making a referral from this file, the center gives the parent as much information as possible about the resource or agency. However, center personnel remind the parent that this is not an endorsement of that specific agency and recommend that the parent get full information from the agency (including fee).

Community Resource File

This guide is concerned with the community resource file. It differs from the Parent's Inquiry File in several important ways:

- the center selects each agency placed in this file and enters into an agreement with the agency at the time of service
- the center keeps records of the nature, frequency, and extent of service delivered
- the center periodically evaluates the service

4. WORKING WITH THE FAMILY

Most of the resources that a center chooses will be used to benefit all of the children served by the center. These will probably fall into three general categories: screening and evaluation, staff and/or parent training, and enrichment.

At time of enrollment, parents are informed of the center's use of resource agencies. This will include discussion of the services provided to the board and staff, such as administrative services and training programs, but will concentrate on direct services to children, such as enrichment programs or developmental screening.

At this time too, the staff person tells the parent of the center's schedule of parent-staff conferences and of the center's policy concerning referrals of children in resource agencies. The parent also informs the center of any services the child is currently receiving or has previously received. Such information will, of course, be kept confidential.

Caregiver's Interview with Parent

The caregiver gets to know the child initially through the parent in a conference at the center or at the parent's home. The purposes of this conference are for the parent and caregiver to

- get to know each other;
- review the parent's goals and expectations for the child;
- identify the information about the child which they will share;

At this time, the caregiver describes the program for the children.

*The only exception is immunization records, which are made available upon request to state child care licensing representatives and to state and local health officials.

5. GETTING TO KNOW THE CHILD

During the first few weeks, the caregiver gradually gets to know the child. She learns about the child's health, skills, activities, habits, and attitudes. From these observations, the caregiver forms an impression of the child's usual health and behavior.

At the same time, the caregiver also observes the child as part of a group, noting the circumstances that result in cooperation, competition, sympathy and empathy, hostility, aggression and affection. Aided by these observations, the caregiver strives to develop an environment that will provide opportunities for learning and social development.

Noting Change

Both the individual child and the group will change during the time they participate in the center program. The caregiver notes these changes by observing and listening to the group as well as to the individual child.

Many caregivers find it useful to write down their observations at the end of each session, noting any changes in individual behavior or in group interaction.

This day-by-day record provides an overview of the group and of the individual children over a period of time and helps the caregiver and the director assess the reasons for change.

Changes, of course, are to be expected. It is easy to recognize some changes in behavior as arising from an immediate need. A child who is tired or not feeling well may be uncooperative or aggressive. A child whose mother has a new baby may seek attention or affection.

Some changes may be recognized as signs of growth. A withdrawn child may begin to chat with another child at snack time; a child with poor motor skills may learn to skip; a child who must be first waits for his turn.

Some assessments are more difficult than the examples above, and it may be necessary to discuss changes in a child with the director, the child's parents, or possibly, a resource agency.

As the caregiver gets to know the individual children and observe them as a group, she/he may recognize that some children have physical, emotional, or developmental needs that cannot be met within the center's program.

Working Together

Before further action is taken, the caregiver's observations are discussed with the director, who also observes the child. If the director concurs with the caregiver's assessment, the parent is then consulted.

The decision to refer the child to a resource agency is a joint decision between the center and the parent. When a center has a group of children who could benefit from the services of a resource agency, the director discusses it with all involved parents. Parents make individual decisions regarding their child's participation.

6. CENTER – RESOURCE RELATIONSHIPS

Board/owner, staff, and parent support of a community resource is based upon an understanding of why the center obtained the resource and what the resource is expected to do. Centers that use resources effectively keep all involved persons informed every step of the way. This includes the following kinds of information:

- the need for the resource
- reason for selecting a particular resource
- terms of the agreement with the resource
- the service the resource is to provide and the changes that may be expected as a result of the services
- the role and responsibilities of board/owner, staff, and parents who are to be involved with the resource, including payment responsibilities
- the schedule and frequency of service
- the method for evaluating the resource

7. EVALUATING THE RESOURCE AGENCY

The community resource file is kept up to date and services are evaluated regularly. These evaluations are part of the file. They include services provided to the center as a whole and those provided to individual children. When services are provided to individual children, the parent's comments are included in the evaluation. The resource agency is told of the evaluation process both at the time of the initial interview and at the time an agreement is reached for them to serve the center.

The Appendices provide additional information regarding working with community resources. Centers may wish to direct staff and parents to Appendix III, which outlines the services to children offered by some state departments.

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE RESOURCE CARD FORM

NAME AND ADDRESS OF AGENCY: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ HOURS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ LANGUAGES: _____

STATEMENT OF GOALS: _____

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: _____

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: _____

OUTREACH/TRANSPORTATION: _____

FEE INFORMATION

MEDICAID APPROVED? ☐ yes ☐ no

side one

RECORDER'S NAME	DATE OF SERVICE	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE	EVALUATION

side two

APPENDIX II: SAMPLE EMERGENCY FORM

Every child center needs a list of emergency telephone numbers posted in a conspicuous spot, preferably right beside the phone.

If your center does not already have such a list, this may serve as the basis for one. Such a list will save time in the event of an emergency.

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Attorney		
Accounting/Auditing Firm		
Center Physician		
Hospital		
Poison Control Center		
Rescue Squad/Ambulance Service		
Fire Department		
Police Department		
Electric & Gas Company		
Taxi Service		
Insurance Agency		
Emergency Repair Services: Electrician Roofer Appliance Service Heating/Air Conditioning Plumber		
Landlord		
Center Chairperson of Board or Owner/Operator		
DYFS District Office (Use to report child abuse during normal working hours)		
Legal Aid Society		
Drug Abuse		
Hot Lines: Child Abuse Control (after working hours, weekends & holidays)		(800)792-8610
Proper Child Fund		(800)322-8174
SCRIP		(800)792-8858

APPENDIX III
NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENTS THAT SERVE YOUNG CHILDREN

Below is a brief description of the programs and services offered children by several departments of state government. These services may vary in kind and form in different parts of the state. Child care centers, therefore, will find it helpful to discuss a department's services with members of its staff preparatory to entering the department in its resource file. Since state departments are very large organizations, no one staff member knows all the programs/services of the department in which he/she is working. In seeking information, therefore, child care centers should be prepared to make several telephone calls and, perhaps, arrange meetings with staff of the different departments.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (DCA)

The Division of Human Resources, of the Department of Community Affairs, houses several programs of interest to child centers. It includes the Office of Hispanic Affairs, the Office of Volunteer Services, and the Governor's State Committee on Children, Youth and Families. As a liaison between the Governor and child-serving agencies, the Governor's Committee coordinates, reviews, studies and makes recommendations concerning children, youth and family programs and services.

The Division of Local Government Services, of the Department of Community Affairs, houses the Office of Community Recreation for Handicapped Persons. This office provides comprehensive in-service education for practitioners and parents to promote the development of recreational services for handicapped persons in New Jersey. For further information regarding any DCA programs, call (609) 292-0006.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)

Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)

The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), of the Department of Human Services, is the primary state agency responsible for providing a variety of services to children, families and adults in New Jersey. Its goal is to encourage and strengthen family life to the point where families will stay together and be able to function on their own.

Any family or individual who lives in New Jersey may request help from the Division. DYFS sets no overall maximum or minimum income limitations in determining an applicant's eligibility for services. Eligibility standards vary according to service program. However, the applicant may be required to pay all or a portion of the cost of services, depending on the kind of service and on his/her ability to pay. Because the amount of money allotted to the Division varies from year to year, certain services may be limited or temporarily not available.

The direct services available from DYFS are provided through its network of local district offices. At least one district office is located in each county. The telephone number of the district office is listed under New Jersey, State of, "Children's Services" in the *New Jersey Bell Telephone* Directory. Usually it also appears in a box designated "Frequently Called Numbers."

In addition, the Division's Bureau of Licensing licenses certain privately operated child care centers, private adoption agencies placing children for adoption in New Jersey and shelters for Juveniles in Need of Supervision (JINS). If you need assistance on any facet of your center's program or facility, contact the Bureau of Licensing, DYFS, One South Montgomery Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625 or call (609) 292-1879. The Bureau's staff of skilled and experienced child center program evaluators and life-safety inspectors will be glad to help you.

Division of Mental Retardation

The New Jersey Division of Mental Retardation operates, contracts for, and manages grants supporting a variety of services. These programs are designed to serve individuals who are mentally retarded or have disabilities which originate in the developmental period.

Social supervision is provided by the Bureau of Field Services. Caseworkers at four district offices are responsible for client intake, movement within the system, and discharge.

Inquiries concerning programs, including early intervention, child development, exceptional day care for infants and pre-school children, and special residential services may be directed to:

Northern Regional Office, Hackettstown	(201) 852-1214
Metropolitan Regional Office, Montclair	(201) 744-3140
Central Regional Office, Bordentown	(609) 298-5981
Southern Regional Office, Hammonton	(609) 561-5070

Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired

The Commission pursues a continuous policy of planning and development to meet the changing needs of blind children and adults. It makes available a combination of expert services without cost. These encompass counseling, medical treatment, education, training, and job placement. The Eye Health Service organizes community-wide VISION screening programs for pre-school children. This screening includes identification of amblyopia, or "lazy eye." The service also provides follow-up and appropriate recommendations and referral for needed care and treatment. Centers may phone (201) 648-3333 for information regarding the Eye Health Service and other services of the Commission.

New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council

The Council operates *SCRIP,* Statewide Computerized Referral Information Program, which is a computerized storehouse of information on pre-schools, evaluation centers, treatment and care services, vocational training programs, camps, day schools, residential schools, recreation programs, counseling centers and other types of facilities, especially those that serve children and adults with severe disabilities originating in childhood.

A child care center or parent may call SCRIP and ask for the agency professional in charge of SCRIP requests. He/she will record the nature of the disabilities of the person for whom information is being sought and the types of services needed. The SCRIP computer will find the facilities and service which match the needs of the handicapped individual. The SCRIP number is 800-792-8858.

The Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS)

DMAHS administers Medicaid, a state and federal health service program for eligible persons. Blind and disabled persons apply for Medicaid at the Social Security Office. Families with dependent children, persons under 21 years of age, and pregnant women apply through their County Welfare Agency. The Division of Youth and Family Services determines the Medicaid eligibility of foster children under its supervision.

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) is a special health program available to all Medicaid eligible children under the age of 21 years. It provides medical evaluation, testing, immunizations, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up to eligibles who request them.

Eligible families are notified of the EPSDT program at the time Medicaid eligibility is determined and annually thereafter. Eligible children considered under inadequate care are especially outreached. Patients have freedom to obtain services from among Medicaid providers.

For assistance in obtaining medicaid services, call your Local Medical Assistance Unit listed in the New Jersey Bell Telephone Directory under New Jersey, State of, Human Services Department, "Medicaid."

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Department of Health, through its Parental and Child Health Services Unit, provides a variety of programs directed at prevention, early detection and treatment, and health promotion. Program elements include maternal and child health services (including prenatal care and services to improve pregnancy outcomes; a special food supplement program Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), for pregnant and nursing women, infants, and children who are determined to be at nutritional risk; diagnostic and treatment services for disabled children; genetic testing and counseling services; family planning; accident prevention and poison control to include prevention of lead poisoning; and public health nursing. Some services are available without charge to the family; others are available on a sliding fee basis. A family may be asked to share in the cost of services depending on their financial circumstances.

For further information regarding these specific services, please call 609-292-5676. For information regarding general public health services available in your area, please call your local health department.

Department of Education

The New Jersey Department of Education administers many programs and services for young children and for the educational personnel who work with them. It is valuable for both parents and child center staff to know about the scope and variety of these programs.

Public schools in local districts provide programs for children, five to eighteen years to age. Kindergartens are offered throughout the state, with the exact age of entry determined by the local boards of education. The educational needs of children of school age are served through regular classes and through programs designed for those with special needs and handicapping conditions, those with non-English-speaking backgrounds, those from migrant families, those with unusual talents and intellectual gifts, and those who may have difficulty with learning basic academic skills.

Some local districts also provide preschool classes. In some cases, all four year old children are eligible for these programs; while in other cases, the classes are designed for particular purposes. For example, programs for preschool children with special needs and/or handicapping conditions are offered in many elementary schools. Parents can learn about educational opportunities for handicapped children through the toll-free number of Project Child Find. 800-322-8174, which is part of a network to match children with special needs to programs which help them. County and local study teams can often assist in the screening, diagnosis, and referral of handicapped children. Inquiries should be directed to the local district, the County Office of the Department of Education, or the Branch of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services of the State Department of Education.

The Department of Education is responsible for certification of professional teachers. Requirements for the nursery instructional certificate and the nursery endorsement are determined by the New Jersey Board of Examiners, which operates through the Bureau of Teacher Education and Academic Credentials. Information about certification may be obtained from the County Offices of the Department of Education.

Among the services provided through the Department of Education are some which may assist child center staff members with program responsibilities. These include the food subsidies administered by Child Care Food Programs of the Bureau of Child Nutrition; nutrition education programs of the Branch of Curriculum; informational services and in-service opportunities offered by the regional Education Improvement Centers; and programs and materials of the State Library and State Museum. The Early Childhood Planning Project is engaged in both short and long-range planning in early childhood education, including interagency cooperative efforts. Information about all these services may be obtained from the Office of Public Information, State Department of Education, 225 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625, phone 609-292-4040.